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CIA Is Skeptical that New Soviet Radar Is Part of an ABM Defense System

U.S. and British intelligence experts question Administration charges that the radar under construction in Krasnoyarsk may be part of a Soviet missile defense.

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Until recently, Krasnoyarsk did not make a lot of news. A stopping off point on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, Krasnoyarsk lies some 2,100 miles east of Moscow and is the birthplace of Soviet leader Konstantin U. Chernenko. But among defense experts, Krasnoyarsk is well known for the phased-array radar which is under construction near the city.

That radar has become exhibit A for Administration hard-liners who have charged that the Soviet Union may be moving to a nationwide antiballistic missile system in violation of the ABM treaty.

Citing the radar and other alleged violations of the ABM treaty, the White House, in its Feb. 1 unclassified report on Soviet "noncompliance" with the treaty, noted that "the aggregate of the Soviet Union's ABM and ABM-related actions suggest that the USSR may be preparing an ABM defense of its national territory."

"The Krasnoyarsk radar is very appropriately located for ballistic missile defense," Richard N. Perle, assistant Defense secretary for international security policy, told the Senate Armed Services Committee last year. In addition to providing the capability to provide early warning of a U.S. attack, Perle said, the radar may have "capabilities for ABM battle management functions."

Moscow has been violating the ABM Treaty by "constructing a major ABM radar at Krasnoyarsk" the Heritage Foundation charged in its 1984 *Mandate for Leadership*.

But the U.S. intelligence community, significantly, has described the radar in less than ominous terms. A classified 1984 assessment entitled "Implications of a New Soviet Phased-Array Radar," which was drafted by the Central Intelli-

gence Agency (CIA) and coordinated within the intelligence community, has determined that the Krasnoyarsk installation is "not well designed" to serve as an antiballistic missile radar. The report, whose existence has not been previously reported, was circulated throughout the Reagan Administration last summer and is based on information gathered prior to last May 1. It is consistent with other other intelligence judgments, according to Reagan Administration officials and congressional officials who have reviewed the assessments.

"The intelligence community is in basic agreement that when the radar is operational, it will not be optimized for an ABM role," said an Administration official familiar with the intelligence assessments. One reason for the judgment, the official said, is that the radar "does not cover the path of incoming U.S. ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] because it is too far east and is pointing in the wrong direction." (See map, p. 526.) This has led U.S. officials to conclude that the facility is an early-warning radar, whose primary function is to provide early warning of a missile attack, and not an ABM battle management radar, which tracks warheads as they re-enter the atmosphere and guides interceptor missiles toward the warheads.

Administration officials familiar with this and other intelligence assessments also say that the radar operates at the wrong frequency to be a battle management radar and that the frequency at which it operates makes it more vulnerable to the "blackout" effect of a nuclear

detonation—that is, the disruptive effects of nuclear explosives on sensitive radars. They also say the face of the radar is not at the optimal angle to perform a battle management function and it is not "hardened," as battle management radars are. They also note that it is not defended by interceptor missiles and that there are no interceptor missiles, associated radars or other ABM-related items near the facility.

British intelligence experts have also taken a less alarmist view of the new Soviet radar and have concluded that it is "unlikely" that it can serve in an ABM battle management role. That judgment is contained in a Jan. 25 report of the Cabinet Joint Intelligence Committee, entitled "Soviet Union: the Abalakovo Radar." (Abalakovo is a small town near Krasnoyarsk where the new radar is located.)

That report, which is currently circulating within the Administration and which draws on the CIA assessment, has also not been previously reported. Although the British report suggests that the facility functions as an early-warning radar, it also found "plausible" Soviet assertions that the radar will also be used for space tracking purposes given projections of manned Soviet space flights in the late 1980s and 1990s.

These intelligence reports do not mean that the Soviet Union may not have violated technical provisions of the ABM treaty that pertain to the location of new phased-array radars, which are technically superior to older radars. Even if the radar is designed to serve as an early-warning alert to Soviet military leaders of a U.S. attack and does not—as the U.S. intelligence reports suggest—have important ABM battle management capability, its placement at Krasnoyarsk would